

Coping With The Loss Of A Loved One

Each year, about 2.5 million people die nationwide. Every death leaves behind an average of four or five grieving survivors. For most, extreme feelings of grief begin to fade within six months after the loss. But some bereaved people may continue to struggle for years to move on with their lives.

How To Cope

It's often helpful to talk with family and friends about the person who's gone. People sometimes hesitate to mention a dead person's name or discuss the loss, because they don't want to cause pain. But it can help when people share their feelings.

Researchers have tried for decades to identify different stages of grief. They've found that the grieving process differs for every individual. It's affected by how attached you felt to the person who died; whether you were a parent, child or spouse; how the death occurred and other factors.

One study found that acceptance of a death comes surprisingly early for most bereaved people, usually within the first month after the loss. The researchers found that in the two years following a death, the most often-reported symptom is yearning for the person who died. Yearning is much more common than depression, anger and disbelief.

This study and many others have found that if symptoms aren't tapering off by six months after the loss, it may be a sign of a more serious problem, sometimes called complicated grief. People with complicated grief are at risk for major depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts and actions.

Remember, although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends.

COPING STRATEGIES

- **Take care of yourself.** Try to eat right, exercise and get enough sleep. Avoid bad habits—like smoking or drinking alcohol—that can put your health at risk.
- **Talk to caring friends.** Let others know when you want to talk.
- **Find a grief support group.** It might help to talk with others who are also grieving. Check with hospitals, religious groups, hospices and local government agencies.
- **Don't make major changes right away.** It's smart to wait a while before making big decisions like moving or changing jobs.
- **Talk to your doctor.** If you're having trouble with everyday activities, like getting dressed or fixing meals, see your health care provider.
- **Consider additional support.** Sometimes short-term talk therapy can help.
- **Be patient.** Mourning takes time. It's common to have roller-coaster emotions for a while.

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Strawberry Banana Yogurt Parfait

Ingredients

- 4 cups light (no-sugar-added) fat-free vanilla yogurt
- 2 large bananas (about 2 cups), sliced
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced (or used thawed frozen fruit)
- 2 cups graham crackers, crumbled
- ½ cup fat-free whipped topping (optional)

Directions

1. To make the parfait, spoon 1 tablespoon of yogurt into the bottom of each 8-ounce wine or parfait glass. Top the yogurt with 1 tablespoon sliced bananas, 1 tablespoon sliced strawberries, and ¼ cup graham crackers.
2. Repeat the yogurt, banana, strawberry, and graham cracker layers.
3. Top with a rounded tablespoon of fat-free whipped topping, if desired. Serve the parfait immediately, or cover each glass with plastic wrap and chill for up to 2 hours before serving.

Yield

8 servings

Serving Size

1 parfait (1 cup)

Nutritional Content

| | | | |
|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Calories | 179 | Total Fiber | 2g |
| Total Fat | 2g | Protein | 6g |
| Saturated Fat | 1g | Carbohydrates | 36g |
| Cholesterol | 3mg | Potassium | 438mg |
| Sodium | 190mg | | |

Recipe Source: Delicious Heart Healthy Latino Recipes/Platillos latinos sabrosos y saludables

